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# MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

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## GALAHAD, NASCIEN, AND SOME OTHER NAMES IN THE GRAIL ROMANCES

### (1) *Galahad*

The name of the famous Grail Winner, which under the influence of Malory and, above all, Tennyson, has become standardized throughout the English-speaking world as "Galahad," appears generally as "Galaad" in the mss. of the Old French prose romance, *Queste del Saint Graal*, whose author invented the character, and in the other medieval romances of the Grail cycle. Now, "Galaad," as was, of course, recognized long ago, is the equivalent, in the Vulgate, of the "Gilead" of our Modern English versions. But why should the author of the *Queste* have hit upon this name as the name of his new Grail Winner, who was to supplant the older Grail Winner, Perceval? Strange to say, there has been little comment on this subject, owing to the fact, no doubt, that Arthurian scholars have generally accepted the conclusions as to the name, which are presented in the only detailed discussion of the question that we have—namely, Richard Heinzel's, in his *Über die französischen Gralromane*, pp. 134 f. (Vienna, 1892). Heinzel, to be sure, assumes in this passage that the elder Galahad, son of Joseph of Arimathea, who is, properly speaking, a character of the *Estoire del Saint Graal* (or *Grand St. Graal*, as it is frequently called), and not of the *Queste*, in which latter branch he is alluded to only once, viz., in Sommer's *Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, VI, 185—was, in some lost hypothetical source, the original Grail Winner, and that only later was the name applied to the Grail Winner that we know<sup>1</sup>)—the Galahad who is

<sup>1</sup> Heinzel (p. 135) makes a generous admission respecting this theory: "Allerdings Zeugnisse dafür liegen uns nicht vor." Except Heinzel, every-

the son of Lancelot and Pelles' daughter. It would be a waste of time to discuss such baseless fancies as these, but, of course, what Heinzel says of the reasons that caused this imaginary Grail hero to be dubbed Galahad would, in essentials, apply with equal force to the real hero of that name.

Now, Galaad (Gilead) is of much commoner occurrence in the Bible as the name of a district (east of Jordan) than as the name of a person, but it does occur also as the name of three persons, respectively:<sup>2</sup> (a) Galaad, son of Machir and great-grandson of Joseph, son of Jacob. See *Numeri* (*Numbers*), xxvi, 29; xxvii, 1, and often elsewhere in this book; also *Josue* (*Joshua*), xvii, 1, 3. (b) Galaad, father of Jephthah, *Judicum* (*Judges*), xi, 1, 2. (c) Galaad, chief of a family of Gad, *I. Paralipomenon* (*I. Chronicles*), v, 14. Of these Galaads Heinzel mentions only the first. The third, it may be granted, has no importance, for his name occurs only once, and that in a mere list of names. Heinzel remarks that the first Galaad in our list is the great-grandson of Joseph of Egypt, just as the elder Galaad in the *Estoire* is said to be the son of Joseph of Arimathea. The parallel is not a very close one, but we need not linger over it, for, as I have said in the note above, nobody but Heinzel has ever doubted that this elder Galaad is a secondary creation to the younger Galaad, the Grail Winner of the *Queste*. He still further calls attention to the words which are used of this great-grandson of Joseph's in *Josue*, xvii, 1: *Galaad qui fuit vir pugnator habuitque possessionem Galaad et Basan*, and still further to *Judicum*, x, 18, *erit dux populi Galaad*, where Galaad might easily be taken for a person's name, although, as the context shows, it is really the name of the district.

In my judgment, these commendations (in one case, genuine, and in the other case, an illusion) of Old Testament Galaads are

body, as far as I know, has regarded the elder Galahad as a secondary creation.

Even in the *Queste* passage, Sommer, vi, 185, where we find the allusion to the elder Galahad, he seems to be named only in a few mss. Cp. Sommer's collations at the bottom of the page. It is not at all likely that this allusion stood in the *Queste* in its original form, for it is practically certain that the *Queste* was composed earlier than the *Estoire*.

<sup>2</sup> It is not necessary for me to give all the occurrences of each name. The complete enumeration will be found in the Bible Concordances, e. g. Robert Young's (Edinburgh, 1880).

of little importance in the choice of the Grail Knight's name. As a matter of fact, I believe that Galaad, father of the renowned warrior, Jephthah, is much more likely to have attracted the attention of the creator of the Grail Knight than the great-grandson of Joseph of Egypt, who was so many times removed from the ancestor in question. If his creator did misinterpret *Judges*, x, 18, in the way that Heinzel assumes—and I think the suggestion very plausible—he would doubtless have applied the imagined exaltation of Galaad to Jephthah's father; for verse 18 is the last verse of Chapter x, and we have in the first two verses of the next chapter the mention of this Galaad, Jephthah's father, and how he begot his famous son. The confusion would have been all the more likely at the time that these romances were written, for the division of the books of the Bible into chapters was only instituted by Stephen Langton early in the thirteenth century, and even if the *Queste* did not actually antedate this innovation, we may be sure that in the very brief interval that elapsed before that romance was written, the new division into chapters had not had time to spread widely, and consequently there is virtually no probability of our author's having had a text with this division before him.<sup>3</sup>

After all, however, the commendations of the Biblical Galaads seem to me, as I have said, of secondary importance in determining the selection of the name of the Grail hero. If the creator of this hero had been merely seeking to identify the character in name with some "leader of the people" in sacred history, he would surely have chosen a greater chief of Israel than any one who bears the name of Galaad in the Bible—for example, Jephthah himself, or Joshua. The primary influences that determined his choice were obviously different, and, in my judgment, they were as follows:

1. He desired to continue the connection of the Grail Winner with Gales (*i. e.*, Wales), for it will be remembered that the original Grail Winner whom Galahad was destined to supplant was called Perceval of Gales. At the same time, since his hero was to be the embodiment of a religious ideal, he desired to give him a Bible name. It was the fact, then, that "Galaad" was suggestive of "Gales" that led the creator of the new Grail Winner to adopt

<sup>3</sup>The division of chapters into verses was not instituted until the sixteenth century. It originated with Robert Estienne (1551)

this particular name for his hero.<sup>4</sup> Any one who is acquainted with medieval etymologizing would feel no surprise to find a writer of that period proposing in all seriousness a real etymological connection between the two names. But it is not necessary to ascribe any such purpose to the author with whom we are dealing. He was simply doing what Geoffrey of Monmouth, for instance, had done before him. Geoffrey, wishing to connect the Britons with the Trojans and Romans, gives the supposed eponymus of the Britons in his history a name that was well-known in Roman history, viz., Brutus. "Brutus," to be sure, does not correspond perfectly to "Britannia," but it was near enough, and, as we know, it carried conviction in the Middle Ages. Similarly, the creator of Galahad, wishing to connect his hero from the land of Gales with the chosen race of the Scriptures (at least, by name), took the name "Galaad" from the Old Testament. "Galaad," too, it is true, does not correspond perfectly to "Gales," but the approximation is about as close as that of "Brutus" to "Britannia."

We are not left, however, to conjecture on the subject of the likelihood of the association of the two names in the mind of the writer in question. In the *Estoire del Saint Graal*, I, 282, it is stated that on the death of the elder Galahad his kingdom, which had hitherto been called "Haucelice" (Hocelice and other variants), was renamed "Gales" in his honor: ". . . apres sa mort changierent il a la terre son non & lapelerent Gales pour lonor de lui, ne onques puis ne li fu chis nons changies ne ne sera iamaiz tant comme li siecles durera." This was, of course, just the reverse of the truth, for Galahad had really been named after Gales, not Gales after Galahad.

2. He had before him already in "Galehaut" (Galehot and other variants) the name of the bosom friend of Galahad's father<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The frequent occurrence of Galaad (Gilead) in the Old Testament as the name of a district would, of course, aid in making it a familiar name to the romance writer.

<sup>5</sup>In his *Arthurian Legend*, pp. 166 ff. (Oxford, 1891), the late Sir John Rhys says that Galahad and Galehaut were originally identical. But, like most of the views regarding problems of the Grail romances advanced in that book, this idea is entirely unwarranted. The author did not know the Old French romances and so was disqualified for passing on these questions. For example (p. 166, note) he did not know that in these

(Lancelot) in the *Lancelot*—a name which he, whether rightly or wrongly,<sup>6</sup> no doubt, interpreted as connected etymologically with "Gales." This name is so close in sound to that of the Grail Winner, that in the MSS. of the Vulgate cycle they are occasionally confounded—so, for example, curiously enough, in the very first passage of the *Lancelot*, III, 3, where the Grail Winner's name (here said to be Lancelot's baptismal name, which he subsequently lost through sin) occurs in the MS. (British Museum, Add. 10293) which Sommer follows in his edition. This MS. here reads "Galahos," which is, of course, really the name of Lancelot's friend, whereas the other MSS. give the correct reading, "Galaaz" (Old French nominative of "Galaad"). We have the reverse confusion, III, 254 (cp. note 4). Manifestly, when the nominative form for the one name (Lancelot's friend) was "Galahos" and for the other (Lancelot's son) was "Galahas"—and both forms occur frequently—it would be impossible to keep them apart. The

romances the form "Galaad" (for "Galahad") occurs. As a matter of fact, it is the usual form. It would be idle to discuss his next identification, of Galahad with the Welsh Gwalchaved, who is mentioned in *Kulhwch and Olwen* in a list of warriors. The bare name occurs just this once in the Welsh stories, and nothing is known of the character, save that he is here called Gwalchmei's (Gawain's) brother.

\* "Galehaut" (and its variants), in my opinion, may very well be connected with "Gales." Such a connection is undeniable in the case of "Galo-brutes" ("Galobrutus"), name of one of Perceval's uncles in the *Perlesvaus*, pp. 3, 333, of Potvin's edition (*Perceval le Gallois*, vol. I, Mons, 1866). The "Brutes" in this name is taken from Geoffrey's eponymus of the Britons, and the "Galo-" is evidently intended to indicate in like manner derivation from "Gales." See, too, the name "Galobrunn," p. 333 of the same romance. It is possible, though not likely, that "Galehaut" etc. influenced these two names. There can be no doubt, however, that the authors of the Arthurian romances (especially, the prose romances) fabricated names wholesale, and we may have accordingly in "Galehaut" ("Galehot," "Galeholt" etc.) the combination of "Gales" with some second element found in other proper names. Cp. such influences in "Lohot" ("Loholt"), which I have discussed in *The Romanic Review*, III, 184, note 20.—Brugger's speculations as to Galehaut being a Viking and a figure in saga, *Zs. f. frz. Spr. u. Litt.* XXVIII, 16 ff., rest on a very slender basis. All the probabilities are that he was created by the author of the *Lancelot*, Part I, who was working up here the old friendship *motif*, so popular in the Middle Ages in the *Athis and Propilias* form.

confusion is particularly common in Malory, who inherited it, no doubt, from his French originals.<sup>7</sup>

Now, as everybody agrees, the *Lancelot* is older than the *Queste*; consequently, I believe that, in view of the conditions which I have just set forth, one may safely assert that the name of Lancelot's famous friend in the earlier romance had some influence in this matter on the author of the *Queste*.

## (2) *Nascien*

This is the name of Galahad's ancestor—head of his paternal line in the genealogy of the *Estoire del Saint Graal*, I, 203. He is, of course, one of the leading characters in this romance, and we hear of him again, in retrospect, in the *Queste*, VI, 26 f., 96 f., 148 ff. He was only called Nascien (Nassien), after he was converted to Christianity. Before that his name had been Seraphe.<sup>8</sup> "Nascien," "Nassien" is derived evidently, though nobody seems to have observed it, from "Naasson," which figures in the genealogy of Christ, *St. Matthew*, I, 4—also, *St. Luke*, III, 32.

Heinzel (p. 142) has commented on the resemblances between Galahad and Christ. Galahad, too, is the son of a virgin and is of King David's line. He illustrates the virtue of chastity, also, like Christ. I would add still further that his ancestors, the Grail Kings, in these romances evidently typify the Holy Spirit, and so, in a sense, he, too, is the son of the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Altogether, I have no doubt that the authors of the *Queste*, *Estoire* and the episodes concerning Galahad's conception in *Lancelot*, Part III, were consciously and systematically parodying the story of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cp. H. O. Sommer's edition of the *Morte Darthur*, II, 161 f. (3 vols. London, 1889-1891), for the variants of these names.

<sup>8</sup> Cp. *Estoire del Saint Graal*, I, 74, in Sommer's edition.

<sup>9</sup> The beginnings of this symbolization, of course, are plainly observable in what Robert de Borron says of the Grail Keepers in his *Joseph*.

<sup>10</sup> There are, of course, secular elements, besides, in the Galahad story, especially in the narrative of his conception. But the story is fundamentally a parody. It is to be remembered that the conception of Christ, himself, as a knight is familiar to medieval literature. In addition to the analogies cited above, E. Wechssler, *Sage vom Heiligen Gral*, p. 117, points also to the passage in the *Estoire del Saint Graal* (*Grand St. Graal*), I, 247 (Sommer's edition), where Christ's seat at the table of the last Supper is symbolized in the seat reserved for Galahad at the Grail table.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that one of them should have drawn on the genealogy of Christ for the name of the ancestor who heads the hero's paternal line. Wanting a name for this head of Galahad's line, he selected one (Naasson) from near the head of Christ's line. For a similar reason, no doubt, the name of Galahad's uncle, Eliezer (Eliazer) was taken<sup>11</sup> from one of the latest of Christ's ancestors (*St. Matthew*, I, 15).

It is interesting to observe that contemporaries recognized the source of these names, Nascien and Eliezer (and possibly others connected with Galahad, which may now be disguised by manuscript corruption), for we find the author of the prose *Tristan*, at the beginning of that romance, drawing again on the genealogy of Christ for the name of a new supposed great-nephew of Joseph of Arimathea (here confounded with Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary, as elsewhere in the romances), viz., Sadoc. The name does not occur in the Vulgate cycle and is plainly taken<sup>12</sup> from *St. Matthew*, I, 14.

### (3) *Hebron*

Robert de Borron, as is well known to students of the Grail literature, in his *Joseph*, calls the second Grail Keeper (brother-in-law to Joseph of Arimathea) sometimes Hebron, sometimes Bron. The metre shows that Robert really uses the alternative forms and that there is no question here of scribal errors. I will not enter at this time into an investigation of the origin of these forms. I merely wish to point out that Heinzel (like other Arthurian scholars) in his discussion of the subject (see his Grail treatise, p. 98) has overlooked the fact that in the Old Testament Hebron is not simply the name of a city (or cities), but also of persons. It occurs, to be sure, only in genealogical lists. Cp. respectively, *Exodus*, VI, 18, *Numbers*, III, 19, *I. Chronicles* VI, 2, 18; XXIII, 12, 19, and *I. Chronicles*, II, 42, 43; XV, 9.

### (4) *Sarras*

This is the name of the capital of the pagan King, Evalac,<sup>13</sup> which Joseph of Arimathea, accompanying the Holy Grail, reaches

<sup>11</sup> I have already pointed this out in my *Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii*, p. xxiii, note 1 (Göttingen and Baltimore, 1913).

<sup>12</sup> I pointed this out pp. xxii f., of my edition of the Latin romances, cited in the previous note.

<sup>13</sup> He was re-named, Mordrain, after his conversion to Christianity.



with his companions on the eleventh day after their departure from Jerusalem (*Estoire*, I, 21 ff., and mentioned elsewhere in the Vulgate cycle). Heinzel, p. 138, labors with all sorts of suggested identifications of this city with various Asiatic cities. But Sarras is clearly a mere city of the imagination, and its name was obtained by simply cutting off *-in* from *Sarrasin* (Saracen) which, like *Saisne* (Saxon), as is well known, was often used by the romance-writers of the Middle Ages as a generic name for pagans of any kind. The author of the *Estoire*, with whom the name originated, has manufactured, I, 262, a King "Escos" out of "Escoce" (Scotland).<sup>14</sup> If he was capable of this, we may be sure that so simple a fabrication as "Sarras" from "Sarrasin" would have given him no trouble. No doubt, "Sarracinte," the name of Evalac's wife, was similarly derived.

I will add to the above a name of Biblical origin which occurs, not in the Grail romances, but in the prose *Tristan*. It was, no doubt, the example of the Grail romances, however, which caused the author of the *Tristan* to trick out certain characters in the initial episode of that romance—the story of Tristan's grandmother, Chelinde—with Bible names. We have seen how this was true in the case of Sadoc, the first of Chelinde's many husbands. It is likewise true of Sadoc's brother, Nabuzardan. Löseth's analysis, p. 4, has the form "Nabusardan," but the form with *z*, which I take from ms. 334 (Bibl. Nat.) is, as will be seen, the correct form. We have here an adoption of the name of Nebuchadnezzar's captain of the guard, who, under his master's orders, laid Jerusalem waste and carried off its people into captivity. In our Authorized Version the name is "Nabuzaradan," but in the Vulgate, which the author of the prose *Tristan* used, it is "Nabuzardan." Cp. *IV. Regum*, xxv, 8, 11, 20; *Jerem.*, xxxix, 9, 10, 11, 13; *XL*, 1.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The writer's warning, *loc. cit.*, that the "roialme des Escotois" was named after its lord "Escos" and was not identical with "la terre d'Escoce" is, of course, a mere subterfuge, to render the *roialme* more mysterious.

<sup>15</sup> The name appears also in a very corrupt form, "Buza(r)farnan," in the Latin romance, *De Ortu Waluuanii*, pp. 65 ff. of my edition, referred to above. I have shown there, pp. xxiii f., how the corruption came about—also, that the author of the *De Ortu* derived the name from the

The story of Chelinde is, to be sure, of Oriental origin, as I have shown in *The Romanic Review*, I, 384 ff., but, in whatever part of the Orient it may have ultimately originated, there is no likelihood whatever of these Biblical names having been attached to it until the author of the prose *Tristan* took hold of it. He was evidently responsible for the whole nomenclature of the story in its present form.<sup>16</sup>

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## THE BIRTH-DATE OF BEN JONSON

The seventeenth-century biographers of Jonson have little to say about the date of his birth. Fuller<sup>1</sup> says that he cannot find him in his cradle. Winstanley<sup>2</sup> attempts to give no date. Neither does Wood<sup>3</sup> nor Blunt<sup>4</sup> nor Aubrey<sup>5</sup> nor Langbaine,<sup>6</sup> but in the eighteenth century we get more definite information. On page 155 of Drummond's *Works*, 1711, is printed a copy of *Und.* vii with the

prose *Tristan*. I had not then discovered, however, that the author of the prose *Tristan* took it from the Bible.

<sup>16</sup> In my edition of the *Historia Meriadoci and de Ortu Waluuanii*, p. xxiii, note 3, I have noted the resemblance between this story and the Greek romances and inferred from this likeness that the source of the prose *Tristan* for the episode was Greek. It reached the French writer very probably through Byzantine channels.

After completing this article, I observe that W. W. Newell, *The Legend of the Holy Grail and the Perceval of Crestien of Troyes*, p. 59 (Cambridge, Mass., 1902), accepts Heinzel's explanation of the origin of Galahad's name, but adds: "Assonance with *Gales*, Wales, may also have had weight." This is all that he says on the subject. I have tried, however, to prove that this assonance was the chief influence involved. J. S. Tunison, *The Graal Problem from Walter Map to Richard Wagner*, p. 34 (Cincinnati, 1904), has also anticipated me, I observe, in deriving "Sarras" from "Sarrasin." He merely remarks: "'Sarras,' as the name of a city, is plainly an effort to give the Saracens a geographical point of origin."

<sup>1</sup> *Worthies*, 1840, II, 424.

<sup>2</sup> *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets*, 1687, 123.

<sup>3</sup> *Athenae Oxon.*, ed. Bliss, II, 612.

<sup>4</sup> *De Re Poetica*, 1694.

<sup>5</sup> *Brief Lives*, ed. Clarke, 1898, II, 11.

<sup>6</sup> *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets*. 1691, 282.